

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please delete paragraph [0042] and replace it with the following marked-up paragraph:

[0042] According to one embodiment of the invention, as follows from Figure 3, the supporting zone 3 is not bounded by a hard-rim seal but by a boundary zone 4 having a reduced height relative to the plane of support ~~[[40]]~~ 20 so that the backfill gas flow is not bounded to the support zone 3. Thus, the backfill gas is permitted to exit the support zone 3. In this way, the boundary zone 4 indicated in Figure 3 forms a "leaking seal" 4. The distance between the top of the leaking seal 4 and the plane of support 20 form a gap 22 through which backfill gas may flow. This leaking seal 4 may be absent, provided that the flow characteristics of the backfill gas pressure, in relation to the feed positions is such that a sufficient pressure can be built up in the presence of the ambient pressure, which is often a vacuum pressure.